

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

Method for removing a portion of the binder phase from the surface of a substrate that is composed of particles of at least a first phase joined together by the 5 binder phase, and wherein the surface is etched by contacting it with a gas flow of an etchant gas and a second gas. The second gas is one or more gases that will not react with the substrate or the removed binder phase and will not alter the oxidation state of the substrate during etching.

10